

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**TRANSLATION PROCEDURES AND
TYPE OF EQUIVALENCE OF
CULTURE-LOADED EXPRESSIONS
IN *HONG LOU MENG***

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ABSTRACT

Culture-loaded expressions are essential in conveying cultural values and meanings, playing a significant role in cross-cultural translation. However, accurately rendering these expressions across languages poses considerable challenges due to cultural and linguistic differences. This study investigates how culture-loaded expressions are translated in the English version of the Chinese literary classic *Hong Lou Meng*, as translated by Hawkes and Minford (2014), with a focus on the translation procedures and types of equivalence used to effectively transmit Chinese culture to English-speaking audiences. Employing a qualitative approach and purposive sampling, the study selects 240 culture-loaded expressions from a corpus of 2,500 samples in *Hong Lou Meng*. The analysis is guided by Sun Xun's classification of culture-loaded expressions (2005), Newmark's (1988) model of translation procedures, and Koller's (1979) theory of translation equivalence. The findings show that all eight categories of culture-loaded expressions, as coined by Sun Xun, are found in *Hong Lou Meng*. The categories of allusions and idioms, and material culture-loaded expressions show the highest frequency, while ecological culture-loaded expressions and poetry appear with the lowest frequency. Data also show that ten translation procedures are used to render the culture-loaded expressions. The most frequently used are paraphrase (80 instances, 33.33%), followed by couplets (55 instances, 22.92%) and literal translation (42 instances, 17.5%). Less frequently used procedures include notes and reduction (3 instances each, 1.25%), loan translation and compensation (4 instances each, 1.67%), and substitution (6 instances, 2.5%). These frequencies indicate a preference for procedures that prioritise comprehensibility while retaining cultural context. Translation equivalence is analysed across four dimensions: denotative, connotative, pragmatic and formal. The results show that denotative equivalence is achieved in all eight categories. Connotative equivalence is achieved in seven categories, with the exception of poetry. Formal equivalence is notably present in the translation of poetry, idioms, and allusions. Pragmatic equivalence is most apparent in socially culture-loaded expressions and Chinese medicine-related terms. Overall, the translators demonstrate a careful balance between cultural authenticity and accessibility for the target readership. Based on the findings, the study proposes a systematic model for selecting translation procedures suited to different categories of culture-loaded expressions to achieve the desired equivalence. This model offers practical guidance for translators and researchers, enhancing the translation of culturally rich texts and promoting the effective transmission of Chinese culture to English-speaking audiences.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter is organised into nine sections, each designed to outline the purpose of the study and provide the necessary background information. It begins with the research background, followed by the problem statement, research objectives, and research questions. The later sections highlight the significance of the study, discuss its scope and limitations, and conclude with a brief summary. Overall, this chapter offers a clear and comprehensive introduction to the study as a whole.

1.2 Research Background

Culture-loaded expressions play a significant role in translation, serving as a vital component in conveying cultural nuances. In today's society, the effective transmission of culture is of utmost importance. Achieving this involves skilful translation of phrases with cultural connotations.

With the expansion of economic globalisation, a “*global village*” has emerged, where politics, economy, and cultures from different countries intertwine. This integration of civilisations not only promotes a more civilised world but has also given rise to a new form of competition, that is cultural soft power (Hou, 2018). In the face of intensified and diversified international competition, a nation's influence, competitiveness, and reputation are intimately linked to its soft power, a form of spiritual strength.

Significantly, the growth of Chinese culture plays a crucial role in enhancing the overall national power. This is due to the importance of culture in the pursuit of global supremacy has increased in the modern world. The international promotion of the Chinese language and the establishment of numerous Confucius Institutes